

YEAR 2 OVERVIEW

Review the [Handbook](#) for detailed information and regulations.

YEAR 2	Fall (3 rd semester)	Spring (4 th semester)	Summer (5 th semester)
Milestones	Appoint Qualifying Exam Committee	Competency Exam APR for Year 2	IDP for Year 3
Courses	NSCI 539 NSCI 790 Course Requirement	NSCI 539 NSCI 790 Course Requirement	GRSC 802 or NSCI 790

IMPORTANT DATES:

September 15 - Year 2 IDP Due

October 15 - Qualifying Exam Committee Due

May 15 - APR/Comp Exam Dates Due

August 15 - APR & Comp Exams Done

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Review the [list of courses pre-approved to satisfy the requirements](#):

- Statistics Course*
- Quantitative and Computational Course*
- Additional Neuroscience-Related Course*

Remember...

*Two must be 4-unit courses. One may be either: two 2-unit courses OR a 3-unit course

*Two must be 500-level courses (e.g., PM 510). One may be a 400-level course (e.g., BISC 411)

Use the [Academic Course Plan](#) to track your completed and outstanding course requirements.

Tuition remission only covers courses directly related to your research and does not cover Auditing courses.

APPOINTING YOUR QUALIFYING EXAM COMMITTEE

Exactly 5 members, at least 3 NGP faculty:

- **Member 1 (Chair):** NGP faculty; cannot be NGP Associate Member; cannot be your Mentor
- **Member 2 (Mentor):** NGP faculty
- **Member 3:** NGP or non-NGP faculty
- **Member 4:** NGP, non-NGP, or External faculty
- **Member 5 (Outside Member):** USC faculty; If NGP faculty, must be in a different department than your Mentor. If non-NGP faculty, may be in the same department as your Mentor.

A non-USC faculty member from another university can serve as an **External Member** (Member 4). They *cannot* serve as or replace the *Outside Member*, and they require approval from the NGP Director.

Work closely with your mentor on your committee composition. Discuss key concepts, domain expertise, and research areas that would be beneficial to your short- and long-term research plans, particularly those to explore in the competency exam. Identify a short list of faculty whose research will complement your goals and meet with them to discuss how they would contribute to your committee. Ideally, you will develop a close professional relationship with these faculty members, which will be mutually beneficial throughout your academic and professional career.

October 15: [Submit the Appoint Qualifying Exam Committee form](#)

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT (APR) MEETING

Students must meet with their Qualifying Exam Committee once per academic year, and all committee members must attend.

We highly recommend having your APR meeting one month before your competency exam start date to help committee members write relevant questions and ensure the information is beneficial for future grant proposals and/or your written Qualifying Exam. Discuss your general area of interest, likely topic, key concepts, new information that would be beneficial to explore more deeply, and question format(s).

Deadlines:

- **May 15:** APR Date Due to Charly
- **August 15:** Deadline to Complete APR and submit the [APR form](#)

COMPETENCY EXAM

The exam is designed for students to read and think broadly about their research question and to express a deeper understanding of the area of neuroscience relevant to their research focus. Students will receive a question from each committee member except the Outside Member (4 total), and have 4 weeks to complete the exam. Work with your committee to establish the exam start date. Students dedicate significant time to the exam, so discuss time allocation in the lab with your mentor.

Deadlines:

- Notify Charly of your exam date at least 3 weeks prior to its start.
- **May 15:** Exam Date Due to Charly
- **July 18:** Latest Possible Start Date
- **August 15:** Deadline to Complete Exam

YEARLY REQUIREMENTS

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Work with your mentor to set goals for your research and professional development this year. Define the specific skills and experiences needed to achieve your goals and how you will develop them. Discuss your progress and accomplishments from last year.

Use the [IDP Template](#) or [My IDP Science Careers](#).

September 15: Year 2 IDP Due

Student Support Forms

Students must report their funding source to NGP for each upcoming semester for data reporting.

Oct. 15	March 15	May 15
Spring form due	Summer form due	Fall form due

This is separate from setting up your funding award! Your mentor's department sets up your funding, then they'll send you an **Award Letter** outlining the terms of your financial award for that semester.

SEMESTER EVALUATIONS

Starting in year 2, your mentor will submit evaluations at the end of each semester to share student progress. NGP Admin collects the evaluations and sends students an official evaluation letter. See the Handbook for detailed information.

NOTE ON DUAL ENROLLMENT

The Graduate School rarely permits students to enroll concurrently in NGP and in another graduate or certificate program. NGP students must first obtain approval from the NGP Director and provide evidence of the research mentor's approval to petition enrollment in another program. Failure to follow these procedures is considered a basis for dismissal from NGP. Students will be solely responsible for tuition fees, and the final decision is made by the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.